HOW to PLAN A LESSON

And Other Talks to Sunday-School Teachers

MARIANNA C. BROWN

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By
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Preface

THE ideas presented in the following pages are based upon both a theoretical and a practical knowledge of the subject, but are all such as have been and can be carried out by workers of ordinary ability and no technical training.

Being interested in the philosophy of education, I saw, as others have done, the great advantage to be gained by applying the fundamental principles of teaching to Sunday-school work. The experiment was tried. In proportion as those principles were followed, the scholars showed both increased interest and increased hold on the matter presented.

This bright response on the part of the children encouraged the spreading of the principles. Accordingly for some years they have been taught to Bible class scholars, in what has been called a Bible-normal class. The advantage to the Sunday-school of such a class is obvious. The Bible-normal scholars give a large proportion of their time to Bible work, and need not be more than sixteen years of age. The same methods are used in teaching classes of children

which the normal scholars have the advantage of observing.

Such value has been attached to these methods that Sunday-school superintendents and teachers have repeatedly asked for talks on the subject. The following pages contain what has been given at these times, which is substantially the same as what is given to the Bible normal scholars and is found successful in actual practice.

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I

THE SPIRITUAL THOUGHT

What We are Teaching

(a) *Our Aim is Spiritual.*—In most American Sunday-schools the scholars have lesson papers in their hands a week or more before the lesson is taught, and know just what they are to do. The teachers also have lesson helps. Yet many teachers stay up Saturday night trying to read and decide what to say to interest their classes the next day. The lesson the scholars are supposed to read at home is not really the lesson that any but a very mechanical teacher gives in class. The lesson read at home is to be an important, and we hope an interesting contribution to the material from which the teacher's lesson is taken. But what really is the teacher's lesson?

The printed lesson is usually a story, or selection, or set of selections, from the Bible. To be concrete, let us suppose the printed lesson is the story of the Conversion of Saul. The scholar reads the lesson at home and perhaps even writes out answers to the leaflet questions. What shall the teacher do in class? See that the written answers are correct? Surely that is something,

but it is little more inspiring than the correction of a day-school exercise. See that the scholars understand each verse of the printed lesson, and all the difficult words? Perhaps, though that is hardly more interesting to the young person than a Latin translation or a grammar exercise. Describe to the class the road to Damascus, the geography of the surrounding country, and the appearance of the company as they travelled along? Certainly this must be done if the scholars are to have an intelligent interest in the event, yet even this lifts the class little if any above the modern day-school geography lesson. Trace it all on a sand pile? Some teachers have a power to interest by this means, and interest is of vital importance, but it is only a means to an end.

What then is our end or aim in Sunday-school teaching? To this question our theoretical answers are substantially the same, though they may vary somewhat in wording. Let us for the present express it as, "To quicken spiritual life and insight, and to give knowledge and understanding of the means of spiritual growth." Our aim, then, is spiritual. Geography and history, as such, are not necessarily spiritual. Bible geography and Bible history can be taught as mere geography and history, without any spiritual significance.

(b) *What We Mean by Spiritual.*—Even moral lessons may miss the spiritual element. Let us

pause a little for the sake of clearness on this point. A man may be a moral man without being a religious man. That is, he may have social and personal habits based upon high ideals, without believing in an unseen world, or even in an unseen, personal God. He may keep the Golden Rule. He may live up to his rules and standards of life better than most men. On the other hand, a Christian man may have been so weakened morally by a past life of laxness, that in spite of faith, and prayer, and earnest effort, his actual deeds fall far short of his ideals.

For instance, one boy may always come to Sunday-school on time and behave respectfully while there. He has been taught punctuality and good behaviour both at home and in day-school. It is a matter of habit with him. He may never think of God's especial presence in the Sunday-school room as a reason for this. Another boy feels himself to be especially in God's presence while in Sunday-school. His whole face lights up in response to the thought of his personal relationship to God and to Christ. He feels more than respectful. In such a case known to the writer, the fourteen year old boy even prayed before coming to Sunday-school that he might behave well while there. But his habits were such that it was almost a physical impossibility for him to walk straight to Sunday-school and keep reasonably quiet while there.

In such cases the moral habit is almost sure in time to follow the spiritual incentive; yet the illustration shows that the one may exist without the other.

Our public schools aim to build up strong moral character. So far as they can, without interfering with religious beliefs, they endeavour to give the children the highest incentives for their moral habits. The Sunday-school must cooperate with the day-school in this. It must supply what the day-school cannot give. It must give the religious or spiritual teaching which the American public school, according to its function, cannot sufficiently give.

Just what then do we mean by the spiritual? To avoid the chilling and stereotyping influence of a definition, let us proceed by illustration. We live in a material world. We can see and touch the chairs, walls, plants, animals, and even the people about us. We need no Sunday-school to teach us of these things. But man acts, and he acts according to something apparently more than instinct. We call these super-instinctive incentives to action, thoughts, or ideas. They belong to the world of the unseen, and it is this unseen world that we call the spiritual world. But we call it spiritual because it is a world of living spiritual beings. We make the division between the visible, tangible, material world, and the world of unseen or spiritual beings.

Nor is this world of unseen beings afar off. God is omnipresent. He is here with us as we sit reading. Nor is He alone here. We are told that we "are compassed about" with a great "cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12: 1). Moreover, we belong to that spiritual world. The very circumstance of our having abstract thoughts and ideas is because we are not solely material or entirely of the material world. There is in each of us an element of invisible, spiritual life, that can commune with other spiritual beings.

It is the teachings concerning this spiritual or unseen world, concerning ourselves as belonging to it, and concerning God as its King, and God as the Power that through Christ raises us to joyous participation in its life, that we should give in our Sunday-school lessons.

This does not mean that all matters of habit and action are to be excluded from the Sunday-school. In the first place, many habits are strictly spiritual. For instance the habit of consciousness of the divine presence is a most important spiritual habit. In the second place, moral habits have their strongest and best incentives in spiritual thoughts. As Sunday-school teachers we should show our scholars the spiritual basis for all their actions, whether spiritual, moral, intellectual, social or of any other sort. Only so can our scholars rise to unity of life and purpose.

(c) *Means to Our End.*—If then our aim in Sunday-school teaching is to give spiritual thoughts and spiritual truths, we see that geography, history and literature, even though they be Bible geography, history and literature, can only be means to our end. It is our work to find the spiritual thought which we wish to convey to our scholars, and to so study and use our historical or other material that it becomes a means or vehicle for conveying that thought.

Does our lesson help give us that spiritual thought? How can a lesson paper, written and edited by people who never saw our children, who knew neither their spiritual progress, nor their daily habits, nor their interests, nor anything else personal about them, decide for us what spiritual thought they ought to have? Surely the strongest argument for having small classes in Sunday-school, rather than having all the children taught at once by the minister who is a trained expert in religious matters, is that the individual teachers are to know their scholars personally, and have so few that their teachings can be made to fit the scholars' personal wants. The most a lesson help does is to suggest some of the great truths that can be drawn from a given passage, and perhaps indicate which truths are usually considered suitable for older and which for younger scholars.

Helpful Considerations.

This deciding on the spiritual thought for a given class, and usually with a given lesson, is the first step for a teacher in preparing a Sunday-school lesson. There are a number of important considerations connected with it; considerations which, when once faced, come to the teacher's aid.

(a) *One Central Thought for Each Lesson.*—In the first place, a lesson is much stronger, as well as more interesting, when a single central thought is taken. We are not neglecting an opportunity when we deliberately put aside all but one of the list of thoughts suggested in our lesson help. We may even put them all aside for a thought of our own. The feeling of eagerness to bring all the truths one can into a single lesson is spiritually unhealthy and feverish. No artist, in viewing a rich and beautiful landscape, undertakes to paint or sketch all that he sees. He selects his especial spot or object. If it be an old mill, the water, the miller, even the fence may help to give character to his representation. It is for the sake of the old mill that he puts them in. So in our teaching. If our thought is the Shepherd's love for the lamb that went astray, it may add to the conception if we merely touch upon the love for those that did not go astray. But it will weaken both teachings if in such a lesson we make them parallel, or use the

second for any other purpose than to throw out or emphasize the first. The person who brings five or six truths into one lesson usually teaches no more truths in the course of a year than the teacher who focuses each lesson on a single central thought. In the one case the truths may sink into the mind by sheer repetition; in the other, they impress themselves by their freshness and strength.

(b) *Central Truths for Bible Portions.*—In the second place there are certain truths that belong especially to certain parts of the Bible. For instance, the gospels teach of self-sacrificing love. The book of Genesis teaches, let us say, of man's free will and power to choose whether he will walk with God or yield to lower impulses. Each of these sections can be made to include many of the teachings of the other, but to try to teach the gospel through the book of Genesis, or vice versa, is like seeking strawberries in November or restricting one's diet to the winter roots in June.

It is desirable that a lesson system should take this into consideration and give the child those portions of the Bible that emphasize such truths as he is ready to take. Variety, however, both of Bible portion and of thought, is desirable. The younger scholars, especially, weary of our whole year courses.

If the lesson system is planned with such con-

siderations in mind, the teacher's first work is to grasp the general theme of the entire set of lessons to be entered upon. It will be of almost equal profit to look backward and forward to the leading themes of the preceding and the following sets of lessons. In preparing a single lesson, where we must discard all leading truths but one, it is both a guide and a satisfaction to know which of the suggested truths we are to have a still more favourable opportunity to present.

(c) *Truths Associated With Bible Passages.*— Again, the single lessons frequently have truths that are habitually thought of as connected with them. Often these truths are the strongest to be drawn from the passage. Usually they are truths that for literary or general culture purposes should be thought of in connection with the particular Bible story or passage. Sometimes, however, they are not the thoughts that we want for our particular classes; and occasionally they do not seem to be the richest thoughts that the passages have to offer.

For instance, let us consider the story of Abraham offering Isaac. What is the customary teaching? Literature, including the New Testament (Heb. 11 : 17–19), seems united in the answer "faith." The scholar who is allowed to grow up without having formed this association is not put in touch with the world's past and beautiful thoughts on a well known subject. On the

other hand, we know to-day that the tribes in the land where Abraham lived offered children to their gods. Abraham was religious and loved his God. It was natural for him to wonder whether he should not do as much for his God as the tribes about him did for theirs. Did the thought come from God? In a sense it certainly did. Had he felt sure of himself, however, we can hardly imagine that he would not have told his son, and allowed or even instructed him to prepare for the important act. There seems to be complete consecration and willingness on Abraham's part, but an uncertainty as to God's will. At last God's will is revealed and Abraham is convinced that human sacrifice, in that sense, is not in accordance with the divine Will. Would not the story have more meaning and be more inspiring to a modern boy or girl if we gave them the historical facts and took the theme, "How God speaks to us"?

Whether the teacher wishes at times to give truths other than the customary ones, or not, it is evident what an advantage familiarity with these truths is. Young teachers should keep their minds always open for them, in order to become conscious of them whether through reading, or sermons, or any other means. This is one of the few respects in which an older teacher has the advantage over a younger one. The lesson help usually suggests this thought among

others, but it rests with the teacher to recognize it and give it its proper vitality and prominence.

(d) *Truths for Humanity.*—So far, in these considerations, we have been thinking chiefly of the lesson plan or the Bible selection; but it is not for the sake of either of these that we teach Sunday-school. In choosing our lesson thoughts it is the needs of humanity, and the needs of our individual scholars as part of humanity, that we must consider before all else. What are the thoughts that draw man to a spiritual Father? What are the thoughts that operate to form a great gulf between man and that Father? Let us dwell a moment on three or four of these truths so fundamental for humanity.

Surely few truths are more fundamental than that of God's love for the sinner. Where is the meaning of the life of Christ apart from this? What sweeter and more quickening texts have we than those that run in the vein of "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son . . . ?" (St. John 3 : 16). Yet think of the teachings habitually given to children in connection with the story of Noah and the Flood, of the conquest of Palestine, of Saul's bloody deeds, of Elisha and the children that mocked him, and a long list of others. Parents even tell children that if they do so and so God will not love them. God is made to hate sin and the sinner alike. Forgiveness belongs to the church member.

Even Bible class scholars seem often to feel that compassion is for Peter; not for Pilate or Judas. While the young person feels himself one of the "elect" he believes in the pardon of his faults. Later the young person falls. He no longer feels as one of the "elect." His sin has brought a great gulf between him and God. The pure God can no longer look upon him, unless to follow him with an eye of wrath. He cannot return. All is lost. Why did his teachers not plant deeper in him the true meaning of the story of David, of the Prodigal Son, of the Lost Sheep; the meaning of Calvary, and the depth of the Father's yearning love?

Again; spiritual life is a matter of growth. Is not all Jewish history animated with this truth? Are not the characters and writings of the disciples beautiful illustrations of it? Are not the gospels full of metaphors such as the increase of the leaven, and the growth of the mustard seed? "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (St. Mark 4:28) may well illustrate not only the increase of knowledge concerning religious matters, but the complete change of ideas appropriate for childish, adolescent and adult religious growth. Yet how seldom we touch upon this fundamental truth concerning spiritual life. Our children are given, and should take, childish, though not incorrect, views of religious matters. Later they

look at these same teachings in the light of wider study and deeper experience. They cannot hold the childish views. Must they give up religion as a phase of childhood? The ground is slipping from under them. The story of struggle, intense suffering, and often despair, that comes at this stage is too well known to need description. But are we not as Sunday-school teachers partly responsible? Should we not have forewarned our scholars? Should we not teach the child to expect growth, and in spirit say constantly to him, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"? (St. John 16:12).

Once more; among the most fundamental truths for humanity must be put the divine use and sanctification of the material, the carnal, the apparently poor. Although accustomed to the grandeur of an Egyptian court, Moses was to demonstrate his divine call by the use of his shepherd's rod, the sign of a despised profession. The theme runs all through the Old Testament, whether interpreted literally or from the point of view of higher criticism; and from the Incarnation on it is almost the key-note of the New Testament. No human being is too unclean (Acts 10) for redemption. No act or occupation fit for a human being is too base or secular to be consecrated and sanctified.[1]

[1] For the great theme of self-sacrificing service see chapter on Child Study.

(e) *Personally Sought Truths.*—With fundamental truths such as these, and with the above-mentioned supply of truths connected with Bible portions and passages, care must be taken to give due attention to the individual child. Children are more profound than many teachers credit them with being. Nevertheless there are some truths which they are more ready to take than others; some phases or presentations of a truth which appeal to them more than others. This involves the whole question of child-study, and must be left for a subsequent chapter. Let it suffice here to suggest that the teacher think first, and last, and most, of the needs and interests of the individual scholar and the particular class.

Moreover, some care is necessary in using any truths suggested from without, whether it be from a lesson help or any other source, lest the vitality of the truth be lost. Surely the verbally memorized teachings of a catechism may some day come to life in the scholar's consciousness, but can we do no better than to let rote work take its chances?

For the sake of life and freshness, then, let us begin with the mere lesson material and seek for ourselves the truth that it may contain. It is well here to remember the teaching of the entire book or portion of the Bible from which the lesson is taken. It is also well to have in mind the geographical, historical or other setting. Let us

take time to absorb the lesson. Then, if we have not already done so, let us by prayer and thought put ourselves in conscious touch with the unseen world. Let us consider how far our scholars are in touch with it. Does the lesson suggest any thought that may throw light upon its laws, or draw us or our scholars nearer to the Source of spiritual life?

For some who are not accustomed to this work it is a help to look for the most spiritual text in the lesson. Quite young scholars can be taught to do this as a step to finding lesson thoughts. In any case, let us not push our search to the point of fatigue or anxiety. We seek life and freshness. If our own spiritual interpretation of the lesson does not come with reasonable effort, let us turn to the suggestions of our lesson helps. Our previous individual search will help to animate the truths supplied, and guide us in selecting the one upon which to lay our emphasis.

(f) *Living the Truths.*—It will also add to the richness and life of our truth if we can live it for a while. We sometimes hear of a person being the "incarnation" of an idea or principle. Strong characters often seem so. Every person with force of character has some leading principle or principles to guide his actions. Contact with such people does more than almost anything else to influence the lives and characters of the young. Our actions teach more forcibly than

our words, and the nearer our words come to expressing the ideals of our own lives the more force and influence they will have.

For this reason it is a great gain if the Sunday-school teacher will make his Sunday-school work and private devotional reading run along the same lines. It may be argued that what fits the child does not suit the adult. To some extent this is certainly so, and the teacher must supplement for his own more personal needs; yet if the teacher cannot to some extent throw in his lot with his scholars' he is not likely to do them much good. We all know the difference between a lesson prepared at the last moment, containing a truth that we feel "will do" to fill out our requirements of what a lesson should be, and a lesson hailed with delight because for weeks we have looked forward to it as an opportunity to illustrate to certain scholars some great thought that has been burning within us. We do not wish our lessons taught with fever heat, but we do wish a healthy glow of life and reality.

The habit of preparing the lesson at the beginning of the week gives opportunity to work it over and enrich it, and even in a sense to live it for the week. On the other hand, anything loses freshness and becomes tiresome if thought of too constantly. Some days in the week must be entirely free from Sunday-school thoughts.

(g) *A Final Requisite.*—After having well

chosen our spiritual truth, and perhaps lived it, we may lose all good results by neglecting a last essential. We have seen excellent teachers come to Sunday-school with carefully prepared lessons, but also with a dress suit case or some other indication of foreign thoughts. A Sunday-school is in itself more or less distracting. The majority of the scholars do not enter the school in a "Sunday mood." No teaching compares in importance with the influence upon the child of lifting it for a while every Sunday into the consciousness of spiritual realities and of the divine presence. Before going to Sunday-school we must deliberately put ourselves into such a mood. We must treat the opening exercises in a way to put our scholars into such a mood. We must speak of secular and week-day matters, not as though catering to the child's lack of consecration, but as though the spiritual world permeated all. While feeling in warm touch with all that is human and natural to childhood as with that which is blessed and sanctified from above, we must at the same time be in such close relation with the spiritual that no ordinary Sunday-school incidents can take away that consciousness. The lesson's spiritual truth must be taught in the divine presence and with divine aid.

II

HOW TO PLAN A LESSON

ASSUMING that the teacher has decided what Bible selection is to be the basis of the lesson, and what spiritual thought is to be the theme, we proceed at once to the lesson outline. The first consideration is that of

THE LESSON TITLE.

This at first seems unimportant. If unimportant, then uninteresting. But while we dismiss the matter of the lesson title as uninteresting, we forget that the child judges of the interest of what is to follow by this same neglected title. Tell a child that you are going to talk about "Samuel," and if the child does not happen to already know of Samuel, you might as well have said Methuselah, or any other name. Tell the same child that you are going to talk about "A little Boy to whom God spoke," and you have aroused both his sympathy and his curiosity.

If the class is old enough to follow a thought and take part in the development of the lesson, in other words if the teacher does not merely tell a story, but proceeds by the question method,

the lesson title has a second work to perform. It should express the general aim of the talk. By so doing it strengthens the unity of the lesson. For instance in the Samuel lesson, the title "A Little Boy to Whom God Spoke," may be interesting. It may do for the infant class to whom the story is told, or it may do as the title of the Bible account that a child is to read at home. But if there is to be class discussion the teacher should give a second title in some such form as, "Let us see to-day 'How God spoke to a little boy long ago.'" From this title can be drawn interesting thoughts as to how God speaks to us. In all the talk, whether introduction, story or conclusion, the child knows, or can be easily shown, when he wanders from the topic in hand.

Some teachers may prefer to call this "stating the aim." In the teacher's mind it can be called either lesson aim or lesson subject. But when we face the child who has wandered from the point, it seems easier to ask, "What are we talking about?" than to ask, "What is the aim of our talk?" Moreover, our real aim is to teach some spiritual truth, and this we do not wish to express to the children at first.

Having worded our lesson title so as to both arouse interest and express the general aim of the talk, we have still a third use to make of it. Every teacher of children has had scholars who remember well the action or interesting part of

stories but who constantly forget or confuse the names of the people about whom the stories are told. Some entire classes if asked what stories they know about Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, would either be silent or make apparently wild guesses. Yet if started on any of the familiar stories about these people they would brighten up at once. Now the lesson title can be made to do much towards connecting the incident with the name. Accordingly, in place of saying, "Let us see to-day 'How God spoke to a little boy long ago,'" we say, "Let us see 'How God spoke long ago to a little boy named Samuel;'" or perhaps, "How God spoke to the boy Samuel." The title can be expressed in a variety of ways according to the age and character of the class. Other things being equal, a short title is preferable.

This principle of making the lesson title unite the lesson fact and its proper name, is based upon two psychological facts. The first is that an entire sentence, if not too long or complex, can be remembered by most people about as easily as a single word. If the sentence contains or suggests an interesting idea it can usually be remembered more easily than a new isolated proper name. The second is that when a thought and a name are habitually associated, as in a lesson title, the suggestion of either one will call to mind the other.

The Introduction.

(a) *Point of Contact.*[1]—This heading and the following may sound somewhat technical and formidable, but the reader will find that they apply to simple devices unconsciously used by many teachers. An illustration from adult life will easily show what "point of contact" means.

Suppose that after Sunday-school the teacher of the class next to yours should stop you and begin an account of the home surroundings and personal peculiarities of the cousin of one of her scholars. It would not be long before you would begin to feel bored. But suppose that the child who was the cousin of one of this teacher's scholars was your most perplexing scholar. The entire matter would be different. You would talk as eagerly as the other teacher and be glad of every point of information. The fact that the child is in your class brings all that the teacher has to say on the subject into contact with your life and experience. That fact is the "point of contact" between the other teacher's talk and your interests.

In Sunday-school teaching "point of contact" simply means beginning with what the child is

[1] Teachers to whom this is new can hardly do better than read Du Bois' excellent little book, "Point of Contact." Much of what is here presented is taken from that source. For more on the entire lesson plan see McMurry's "Method of the Recitation."

already interested in. It requires but little observation to learn that the child is far more interested in that which he has seen or experienced than in something far away either historically or geographically. He would rather know about the flower he has seen than about the beginning of the world. If he is interested in a historical character it is probably because he knows of that character as a child like himself. He is interested in children. If "in olden times" is to make a happy introduction it must be associated with "when wishing had power" or some other conception familiar to the experiences of childhood. It is the same with older scholars. Their experiences are broader, but the subject must still be in some way connected with their lives.

To illustrate;—suppose we are going to teach the story of the "Good Samaritan" to boys nine and ten years old. We take the theme or spiritual thought, "All people are neighbours and brothers because all are children of the same Father." But we must not tell the spiritual thought at the beginning of the lesson. Shall we begin by discussing each verse, explaining each word as we read along? Will the boys care anything about a "good Samaritan"? Tell them where Samaria is on the map and will they care any the more? On the other hand, begin by asking how many know an Italian when they see one. How many know a Jew, and so on.

Do they in any sense belong to the same family that we do? The answer will almost surely be "no." Then state the lesson subject as—"Let us see what Christ said to a young man about whom he should think of as brother or neighbour."

A second point comes in here. Not only must we touch our scholar's experience to make our subject interesting, but we must touch concrete experience if possible. So in the lesson on the "Good Samaritan" we do better to follow our introductory questions by such as "To what nationality does your school janitor belong?" "To what does the man with the peanut stand?" and so on. This leads to a talk on the question of annoying such people for fun. Then if the lesson is well brought out it requires little or no formal conclusion to make the boys feel that it is more noble, knightlike and Christlike to take the part of the school janitor and of the peanut man than to annoy them.

It may seem that this is putting the application before the lesson. To some extent it is. It is putting the concrete before the general, and that is the method of modern science. It is the method the children are taught to respect in their day-school work. The order of the lesson should be,—first, the most familiar cases; then the strong-case, which is usually the Bible story; then the conclusion which we reach by considering these

cases. Not that this method strengthens the already supreme authority of the Bible, but that it strengthens our conclusion in its application to modern times and the scholars' lives. The object, however, is less to form a scientific conclusion than to put the scholars in an attitude of interest and receptivity towards the lesson truth.

Moreover the modern method begins with the less spiritual and leads to the more spiritual. This leaves the scholar on a high plane. He is more likely in the closing exercises to feel the meaning of the words, "Free from care, from labour free, Lord I would commune with Thee."

This ending with the spiritual rather than with the application involves the whole question of the object of the Sunday-school and of its relation to secular training. If the Sunday-school is responsible for a child's moral habits, perhaps the lesson should end with the application. But who is to see that the child puts these suggested applications into practice? If the home and the day-school do not see to this, the child almost certainly simply becomes hardened to hearing what his nature cannot unaided act upon. Nothing could be worse for his moral nature. On the other hand, if the Sunday-school is to teach the spiritual motive for habits begun and encouraged at home and in school, we can do no greater service than to lift the child to the highest point of vision of which he is capable, and

leave him there for a while. Also if our object is to teach spiritual habits, such as reverence and prayer, this is the strongest method.

One more thought before we leave this subject of point of contact. As our aim is to teach spiritual truths, our point of contact must be between the spiritual truth and the child's experience. Many teachers grasp the idea of point of contact, but use it to make the Bible story or mental picture more vivid, rather than to make the thought of the lesson more clear. The story should indeed be as lifelike as possible, and the mental picture vivid, but this is not the place to accomplish that.

For instance, take the story of Samuel in the temple. We wish, let us say, to teach that God speaks to pure hearts in quiet times and sacred places. Shall we begin by asking what temples or great places of worship the child has seen? Shall we ask what churches beside his own he has been in? Shall we talk of ministers to-day as compared with priests? This might help the story, but the story has other devices to depend upon and our point of contact is needed for something more important.

Let us rather begin, after telling the lesson subject, by asking the child if he has ever been alone. Let him give instances. He will be almost sure to speak of being alone in the evening. Ask if he felt alone. Ask if he really was alone.

Bring up a strong feeling of God's fatherly presence at such times. Bring out how much less or how differently we feel God's presence when we have some wrong thought in our mind, and how that keeps us from listening to Him. Speak, perhaps, of the church or Sunday-school room as a place where God is especially apt to speak to us. Speak perhaps of why we close our eyes in prayer. All these things help the child not only to appreciate the story but to feel the spiritual thought. The story is as it were the climax.

(b) *Correlation*[1] is another step leading towards our climax. Point of contact deals with contributions which the child can make from his own experience. It gives reality and depth to the lesson. Correlation deals with contributions which the child can make from his previously acquired knowledge, as, for instance, from other stories. This gives strength and breadth to the lesson. In our lesson on Samuel, the child's own experience of feeling nearer to God at times when alone or in Sunday-school gives depth and reality to the lesson truth. If the child has already learned the story of God speaking to the faithful Abraham, to recall that gives a wider view of the truth.

[1] Teachers to whom the general lesson plan as suggested in this chapter is new might omit this section on correlation till they are at ease in using the general outline.

Much review work can be introduced in this way. One trouble of teachers is that their scholars remember their lessons if the questions are asked in just the same form as before, but if the subject is approached from a slightly different point of view, as is sure to be the case if a visitor is allowed to question the class, the scholars do not recognize the subject. The habit of calling up such parts of previous lessons as fit the new lesson subject does much to overcome this difficulty. But the first consideration must always be the strengthening of the new lesson. This is not the place for review proper, and no far-fetched comparisons must be brought in for the sake of review.

When facts from previous lessons are introduced for correlation it is sometimes called longitudinal correlation. Cross correlation means the correlation of knowledge from the other branches of study, as geography, or science, or general literature, with the Bible lessons. If our lesson is on the Good Samaritan, we may have our boys recall some highway robber scene; or, what will help the meaning more, some illustrations of kindness to enemies. Boys' books, even their school-books in these days, are full of such incidents.

Care must be taken, however, that no new material is introduced under this head. The object is still to prepare the mind for new material

that is to follow. As has often been said the mind is not a vessel into which we can at will put what we wish. Only in proportion as the new comes into relationship with what is already in the mind will the mind retain it. Only in proportion as the new is assimilated with the old in the mind can the mind use it.

Cross correlation, by associating the highest spiritual truths with secular knowledge as well as with Sunday-school topics, does a great service towards harmonious character development. We do not live in Switzerland, and our week-day paths are not studded with visible wayside crosses. Yet we do wish our week-day thoughts lifted and sanctified. This can be done partly by direct teaching, but more by the association or correlation of week-day subjects with the Sunday-school lesson. All knowledge and all life must be united in one aim. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." Let as many week-day thoughts as possible be so associated with our highest thoughts that they lift us to our best.

It is not at all important that correlation should come after point of contact in our lesson outline. In some lessons we seem to approach our theme more gradually and easily by the other order. Neither can we make a rule as to the proportion of time to be given to this introductory work. There are lessons where nearly the

entire period should be given to it. There are others where the story seems so connected with the scholar's life, and the spiritual thought so apparent, that introduction or conclusion seems almost to detract from its unique power.

The New Material.

(a) *General Method.*—Most of us have seen teachers who held their scholars spellbound while telling a lesson story. Most of us have also seen teachers who incited intense interest by the question or development method. Which plan shall we follow? Obviously the answer to this question cannot always be the same.

The introduction ought almost always to be according to the question method. Without some response from the child we cannot tell when we have come in contact with his life or when we have aroused his interest. Each Sunday he comes to Sunday-school in a different mood. Some days a single reference to a subject would arouse his entire being. Other days that subject is far from his thoughts. We want his answers in order to know when our introduction has accomplished its work.

Moreover, the very self-activity required in trying to answer helps the child to put himself into the desired mood. If he is merely to listen to the teacher, the teacher has, in a double sense, the entire work to do. The teacher's efforts

must bring the scholar to the desired line of thought. If the child is to answer questions, he makes himself come to the desired line of thought for the sake of the pleasure of taking part in the conversation.

Meanwhile, from these answers based on the child's own experience and knowledge, we learn far more than whether our introduction is successful or not. Any teacher who has tried this is aware how much is learned from children in this way. Any person interested in the modern researches concerning child interests and child powers knows what an advantage it would be if intelligent Sunday-school teachers would keep carefully the information obtained in these introductory talks.

The question of presenting new material is different. Children love a story. Children under ten or eleven do not feel that a narrative developed by the question method is a story, even if the teacher tells considerable and is never so graphic. Therefore, for the sake of making the children enjoy the new material the story method is desirable with the younger classes.

By the time the children can read, or at least when they are advanced enough to be out of the primary day-school, the work will be more dignified and improving if the question method be used even for the new material. The children should read the lesson at home and be able to

contribute to the building up of the story in class. This usually begins at about nine years of age. As the children still love and perhaps even prefer the old story method, it is well for a year or two to mix the methods, usually building up the story but some days telling it.

In large classes especially, it seems easier for the teacher to talk than to see that each scholar contributes something. That older scholars retain less when they take no active and personal part in the lesson is easily overlooked. But after eleven or twelve years of age the children only become stupid or restless if the teacher does too much of the talking. The real teacher faces the facts and rises to the question method.

On the other hand, the question of discipline becomes for some people more difficult when the developing method is used. To require children to be still is for some easier than to control their activity. Yet in either case it must be remembered that successful discipline depends on the firmness of the teacher and on mutual affection rather than on the method of instruction. It may be easier for some teachers to be firm concerning the simple rule "be still," than to be firm with regard to the more elastic one "help." It is easier, however, to win affection from those who help than from those who are still.

(b) *The Setting.*—Whether we proceed by the

question or the story method, we do not wish the action of our story or the meaning of our passage interrupted by long explanations. If there is any matter in the lesson that requires more than a word or two of explanation it should be handled before the lesson proper is begun. Sometimes it can be brought in after the general introduction. It should be openly the explanation of something that is wanted for the lesson. If the lessons are read at home before they are discussed in class, it is much better to explain such matters in giving out the lesson.

For instance, if we are to take the story of the lame man who was told to take up his bed and walk, and our scholars are so young that they need more than a mere word of explanation regarding the bed, that explanation should be brought in here. If we are to take the story of the Good Samaritan, the entire question of the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans should be brought in here. If the story is read at home, the matter should be explained in giving out the lesson, and only touched upon in review here.

When the lesson of the previous Sunday is so closely connected with the matter of the present lesson as to form part of its background, this is the place for a quick review of that lesson. But just as in correlation only such facts from past lessons must be used as help the thought, so now

only such facts of the last lesson or of any previous lessons must be used as help to form a setting for the present lesson. Review for the mere sake of review must be an independent matter.

One great difference, however, exists between material used for point of contact or correlation, and material used here for the lesson setting. In point of contact and correlation no new material must be introduced. Here in the lesson setting is our chief time for instruction. Events that happened between the last lesson and the present, when helpful to the story, may be told outright. It goes without saying that it is well, both in giving these facts and in giving the above mentioned explanations, to see whether any child can contribute. But we must not encourage mere guessing, and we must not linger for slow development in this part of the work. We must keep our minds on the lesson theme.

(c) *The Use of the Bible.*—Secular educators are more and more advocating the plan of presenting the lesson by the development method in class before the text-book is studied. The text-book, where the scholars have one, is used rather in place of notes. The scholars' self-activity and interest in class are greatly increased by this method. The strongest argument for studying the text-book first, is that by so doing the scholar learns the practical use of books.

We are not concerned that Sunday-school

children shall learn to use lesson leaflets. Even if we were, we could rely on their secular teaching to give them that power. We are, however, anxious that they learn to use the Bible. In order to teach them this we must have them individually and by themselves endeavour to use it. We also want them to enjoy it. To accomplish this we must give them such parts to read or study as cannot fail to interest them. For the first few years of home Bible work in connection with the Sunday-school the story is about all that will interest the child. Let us therefore pick out interesting stories, assign them for home reading, one each week, and when assigning a given story explain any matter the knowledge of which is important for the intelligent reading of it.

Happily, owing to the exceptional nature of Bible work, this will not interfere with the use of the development method in class. The younger scholars should read the Bible story for the simple interest in the story. In class they study a subject, beginning with their own experience, and leading to a spiritual truth. The Bible story is but one source from which their conclusion is derived. It is for this reason that we plan a slightly different title for the class lesson from that used for the home study. With scholars old enough to be taught to seek a spiritual thought in their home Bible study, the teacher should be careful to draw out the scholars' thoughts, but he

should also be careful that he present a new, fresh view of the matter in class. In other words, as has already been said, the class lesson must be quite another matter from the lesson studied at home. The teacher's work is to lead the scholars to see a spiritual thought just above what they would see unaided.

With regard to the advisability of putting the Bible into the hands of young people much has been said. Practically, if children are given Bibles when so young that they find it difficult to read more than the appointed lesson, and the lessons are wisely chosen, they are easily led to feel that much of the Bible is incomprehensible to them, and that the way to enjoy it is to read the portions assigned. This soon becomes habit, and the child is in much less danger than when brought up to wonder why he should not read it. It is a serious question whether the habit of keeping the Bible from children is not responsible for its wide-spread disuse among adults.

But the Sunday-school use of the Bible does not end with the home reading of the lesson. One reason given for keeping the Bible story till the end of the Sunday-school lesson, whether story or question method is used, is that it puts and leaves the child on a high mental and spiritual plane. This is not so when teachers give the extremely free versions of Bible stories that we sometimes hear. We should do better to hold as

closely as possible to the Bible account, even to the very words. This is not in opposition to giving facts or explanations, but merely to literary changes. From a merely literary standpoint we cannot reach a better style. The child feels this literary force and beauty. By using the Bible language orally we help him to read it well. He learns to enjoy it.

Moreover, there is a sacredness in the Bible words and Bible forms which the child easily feels. He should be encouraged to feel it. No rational modern interpretation of Bible stories will do as much to take away this feeling as the habit of reducing them to secular language and subjecting them to personally devised changes. The child does not want his story changed. If he knows the story only as we have told it, he is grieved later to find that it was otherwise. He would far rather know that his story is only legend or parable. He enjoys fiction. He hates alteration. He expects, and should be encouraged to expect, his idea of the meaning to change. Let us not throw away or tread upon the child's feeling of the Bible's sacredness. Let us rather use it, encourage it, and guide it. Let us help him to feel that the climax of the lesson is the Bible story.

(d) *The Story*.[1]—Happily for the Sunday-school teacher, stories are excellently told in the

[1] See Hervey, "Picture Work."

Bible. The skill of the teacher is shown chiefly in choosing the right portion to be read as the story, and in seeing its good points.

For instance let us take the story of Balaam and Balak. Some people to-day would urge the omission of the part about the ass lest the child question whether the ass really spoke. But the part about the ass is the best part of the story. It is in the Bible because it is instructive. We can tell our children openly that we do not know whether it is history or not. We can even tell them that we do not think it history, if we feel so about it, but that it is in the Bible because of its meaning. Read over the story and see its perfection. As we can explain the setting, either in giving out the lesson or before discussing it in class, let us begin where the children will feel it to be a good story. Begin with the words, "And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass" (Num. 22 : 21) and end with, "The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (v. 38).

For older scholars more of the account may well be included in the home reading. The entire story of Balaam and Balak has a deep meaning. But for children we can take the simple story indicated, and make our theme "right motives." When Balaam looked only for Balak's reward, God was displeased and opposed him lest he should harm the Children of Israel. When

Balaam was ready to turn back if God wished it, and would speak only what God said, God was with him. This is especially appropriate for children who have had the Genesis theme, "walking with God."

In selecting a story, the first thing to look for is *action*. In this story there is no quiet description. Some verses are given to conversation, but most tell what was done. In telling or developing the story we must keep this characteristic.

In setting the limits of a story or Bible passage, we must look for *unity*. The best way to do this is to feel the story as a whole, decide on the spiritual thought, and then test any doubtful verses at either end by seeing whether they add to the thought. In the story of Balaam and Balak, if we at first tried to begin with the paragraph mark at verse twenty-two we would soon find that the "he" wanted an explanation. Verse twenty-one needs nothing behind it as far as the mere story goes. For the meaning much more than the entire chapter is necessary; therefore we must give that information briefly as the story setting. The three final verses of the chapter, which we have not included in the lesson, introduce the question of sacrifices, a new element requiring the following chapter for its completion. Verse 38 seems to round off the story by confirming Balaam's good resolution.

Having chosen our story and fixed its limits,

we next look for its natural divisions. To put a few *clear headings* on paper will be a help in class. In our Balaam story we might take such headings as the following:—

1. Starting off (verse 22 and last part of 23).
2. The three interruptions (verses 23–27).
3. Conversation with the ass (verses 28–30).
4. Conversation with the angel (verses 31–35).
5. Balaam and Balak (verses 36–38).

Such headings guide us, and sustain the lesson unity, while we enter into the rich detail characteristic of attractive stories. *Rich detail* does not necessarily mean many words. In Bible stories it is usually expressed in a few well chosen and telling words. In the Balaam story the angel stood in Balaam's way three different times. Each time we are told definitely about the road at that particular place. Each time we are told definitely what the ass did; for each time he did something different. Each time we are told what Balaam did, and even that it was with a staff that he smote the ass. We are even told Balaam's motives for striking the ass. At first it was for the practical purpose of making the ass return to the path. The third time Balaam's anger was kindled. We are told what the angel had in his hand, and that the sword was drawn. All this and more is vividly given in six ordinary Bible verses.

The conversational parts of Bible stories are equally full and to the point. The teacher cannot do better than follow them as closely as possible. But where we cannot quote exactly, we need not on that account drop from direct to indirect discourse. If a story is to be vivid the conversation must be in the form of *direct discourse*.

Where the Sunday-school teacher has most difficulty is in dealing with long stories such as that of Job. But the difficulty is really in deciding what definite portion to select as the story proper. In teaching secular history modern method tends to give children the full details concerning a single typical or epoch-making character or event; and to leave out entirely the many less important characters or events. The story of Job is easily handled if we divide it into two parts. The first includes the first two chapters, or, The Temptation. The second includes most of the last chapter, or, The Outcome. What happens between can be told in a few words. The point is to make the selected parts as full and as vivid as the Bible does.

The final point for the teacher to remember is to himself *mentally see and hear* what goes on in the story. To do this the story must be in concrete form. When we hear a teacher begin with "A person," we can be pretty sure the story will amount to little. Bible stories at least

begin with, "A certain man," if they do not give the name of the man. It is for the sake of the picture that we try to teach our scholars how people in Bible times dressed, and lived, and thought. We must not interrupt the story for more than a word or two of this information, but in giving out the lessons, or in the lesson setting, we can from time to time give our scholars considerable knowledge of these matters. The teacher who has informed himself as to the facts, and who pictures the scenes vividly, will both consciously and unconsciously, by little words and actions impart life to the story.

(e) *Fixing the Material.*—Some teachers go to considerable length in trying to "fix the lessons" in the scholars' minds. Reviews are important. It has also been suggested that old material be used in correlation and in the lesson setting. But when new material has been properly introduced and made interesting it is easy to overdo the fixing process. It seems preferable that none of it should come between the lesson story and the conclusion.

Putting the lesson outline on the blackboard is to make the child conscious of the skeleton or machinery of our work. It is work for normal classes. Tracing the lesson on a map or sand pile is to distract the scholar from the vivid mental picture. It is work for geography classes. Some map work can be brought in under the

lesson setting. Some sand pile work and map or picture drawing can be given as review work. Some subjects, as the tabernacle or the temple, can be even studied in a constructive way. Activity is certainly desirable. But to put such work between the story and the conclusion, or even between the story and the close of Sunday-school, is to dim the mental picture, to disconnect and almost surely lose the spiritual thought, and to put physical activity in the place of spiritual activity.

The Conclusion.

Children's intuitions are quick. In many cases we have hymns that express beautifully the lesson thought. Where such a hymn is known by the scholars, an almost ideal ending to the lesson is to ask what hymn they would like to sing as expressing the thought, and then sing it. This both avoids expressing the thought in too blunt a way, and provides some activity. Unfortunately, even where such a hymn is known to the class, the organization of most Sunday-schools is not such as to make this practicable.

In most cases the best course to take is to ask directly for the central thought of the lesson. If we have stated our aim, for instance, as, Let us see how God spoke to the boy Samuel, we now ask, How did God speak to Samuel? If we have developed the lesson well, the children will

know that it was quietly, for Eli did not hear. It was gently, for Samuel was not frightened. It was not suddenly, for God gave Samuel time to go to Eli and to find out who was speaking. When the children have expressed these ideas, we can say that in another Bible story we are told that God spoke with a "still, small voice," and ask if they think those words tell how God often speaks. If they think so, let them repeat the words.

The teacher must always think beforehand how the spiritual thought can best be expressed. Very frequently it will be in some simple Bible words. The work of the conclusion is to have the scholars express the thought as well as they can; and then offer the previously selected wording of the thought for their acceptance if it appeals to them.

If the teacher wishes to be very full and formal with his work he must state the lesson aim slightly differently. If the story is of Samuel, he can say the home work or the story is about "God speaking to the boy Samuel," but in class he must give some such aim as "how and when God usually speaks to people." Then the full and formal work of the conclusion could be what is technically called analysis and synthesis. First the times and ways that God speaks, as developed under Point of Contact, are recalled; then those suggested under Correlation; then those in the

Lesson Story. This is called analysis. Then the three groups are compared, and the times and ways common to all are selected as the usual times and ways in which God speaks to people. This is called synthesis. There remains but the expression of this conclusion in as few words as possible.

This method is touched upon that the teacher may know what is behind the briefer method desirable in Sunday-school. Grown people rarely express all the steps of their thoughts in forming conclusions. Children do not know the steps, and as their conclusions are aided by quick intuition it would only be tiresome for the teacher to hold them to the forms of reasoning. If, however, the children do not easily reach the right conclusion, a few analytical questions along the above suggested lines will help them.

There are occasionally lessons that should not be treated by this process of analysis and synthesis. We accept certain matters as types, and proceed by deductive reasoning as we would from a previously established general law. The account of the Resurrection, or of the Ascension, for instance, is better treated as a type. We may prepare the way for the thought of resurrection by illustrations from what the scholar knows to take place in nature, but our reason for believing that we shall rise is because Christ has told us so, and has shown Himself, our accepted

type, to have risen. This "type" form of lesson is easily misused. It should seldom be resorted to, and the teacher should be careful never to slip into it unconsciously.

When children have shown themselves quick at seeing the conclusion, it is often well to omit the lesson conclusion entirely. For instance, if the story of the Prodigal Son has been well introduced, with strong point of contact and correlation, it might be quite enough to merely ask in conclusion, who does the father in the story represent? Who does the prodigal son represent? The children will feel the meaning and force of the story better than we can express it. Most conclusions are better either left to the children's ready intuitions, or expressed in standard words as from a hymn or the Bible.

III

LESSON PLANNING ILLUSTRATED

THE two lessons given in outline here have been chosen at the requests of teachers. In the first case the request was to show how the lesson on the "Discourse with Nicodemus" should be treated for a class of small children. It is not a lesson that most teachers would choose for small children, but a uniform lesson plan might, as in this case, make teachers wish to do the best they could with it. The only modification of method necessary in this lesson is that of comparative freedom with the lesson material, a freedom, however, less extreme than that used by many teachers when they have a more appropriate story. Fortunately the lesson contains a story within a story, and this inner story is the important part for the child.

THE DISCOURSE WITH NICODEMUS

St. John 3 : 1–15.

(For children about eight years of age. For older scholars both theme and treatment differ radically.)

Subject to be given to the children :—What

Christ said to Nicodemus about being born again.

Theme (not for the children):—Renewed life obtained by looking to Christ upon the Cross.

INTRODUCTION.

Point of Contact.

(*a*) Externally renewed.

How many like to play in the earth? (For country children talk of digging. For city children without yards, speak of open lots or piles of earth for building.)

Do you become very dirty when playing in the earth? Your hands? Your clothes? Even your faces because you put your hands on them? (Children will be sure to amplify.)

When you are called in, it feels horrid to be so dirty, doesn't it?

What do you do before supper, or before father comes home? (Wash hands, wash face, perhaps put on some clean clothes.)

Do you feel like a new person then? (Repeat answer,—yes, you feel like a new person after you are washed and clean.)

(*b*) Physically renewed.

Do you ever go shopping with your mother? For shoes? What else?

Do you ever feel very tired when you come home? And hungry? And cross?

What makes you feel like a new person again? (Supper, and perhaps bed, after which we awake all fresh again the next morning.)

(*c*) Inwardly renewed.

Sometimes we do wrong. Do we feel happy then?

If we do not tell, does that make us more or less happy? (Picture *briefly* not looking at father and mother in the face, etc.)

Does this uncomfortable feeling make us more likely to do other wrong things? (Speak of bad things going together and of feeling as though a cloud hung over us.)

What do we do to feel like a new person again? (Tell father or mother.)

Correlation.

(If the children know some story in which this is well pictured, as where Ranald Bannerman blew smoke into the old woman's room, etc., have them recall it. This would be cross correlation. If the story is review Bible work, as the story of the Prodigal Son might be, it would be longitudinal correlation.)

NEW MATERIAL.

Setting for the outer story.

If we do wrong often there comes a time

when telling father and mother is not enough to make us feel like a new person. What shall we do then? (The children will probably say, "Tell God.") God is always ready to forgive us, but doing wrong leaves a poison in us. How can we get rid of this poison? Christ tells us in to-day's lesson.

Do you remember of what people Christ was one? (The Jews.) What else were those people, or what was that nation sometimes called? (Israel), etc. (If the children are very young, omit explanation of Pharisees.)

The outer *story.*

Read (unless the children have read at home).

There was a man [of the Pharisees] named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night (pause to let the children emphasize the idea of night. Show picture if desired) and said unto Him, Rabbi, [that is master] we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be

born again [that is unless he become like a new person], he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? . . . (omit to v. 7).

Jesus answered, . . . Marvel not [do not wonder] that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be?

Then Christ tells Nicodemus that there is a Bible story, in the Old Testament, which shows how one can be born again or made like a new person. I will read you that story. Nicodemus knew it already, so Christ only mentioned it and showed its meaning.

Setting for inner story.

(Explain about the people being lead by God and Moses to a promised land.) The people do wrong as they walk and travel through the wild country.

Did you ever see a snake in the country?

In the Bible they are called serpents. Some bite, sting, poison. The poison goes into people and kills them.

The Story.

Read (Num. 21 : 6–9) :

And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent [what would look fiery? Brass?], and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Conclusion.

Christ reminded Nicodemus of this story, and said, (Read :)

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man

[that is Christ] be lifted up; [upon the cross].

That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

How were the people healed from the snake's poison and kept from dying? (By looking to the brazen serpent.) How was Nicodemus to be healed from the poison of sin and be made a new person, or be born again? How are we to be healed from sin and its poison, and be made new or born again? (By looking to Christ who was lifted up on a cross to die for us.) Do we (not *you* at this age) believe that Christ died on the cross to heal us from the poison of sin? Let us read Christ's words again. (Read vs. 14, 15.) Shall we learn them? (Have the children say them over.)

In the second case the request was to show how to interest a class of girls who seemed to care for nothing but dress and social entertainments. The particular girls in question were about fourteen and fifteen years of age, and in the habit of attending Sunday-school, so knew considerable about the Bible. The teachers were practically free to choose their lessons. The particular topic, "Esther," is only one of many

that can be treated in the general way indicated below. Solomon would be quite as good except for the temptation to dwell on the misuse of opportunity and the turning away of Solomon's heart (1 Kings 11). Care should be taken, however, lest we too easily think girls to be only interested in dress. In most cases, if the teacher would assume deeper interests, deeper interests would appear.

ESTHER'S BRAVE RESOLUTION

(This title is suitable for the home work. For girls fourteen and fifteen years old.)

The Bible portion to be studied at home is the fourth chapter of Esther. The important facts of the first three chapters of Esther are supposed to be known either through previous lessons or by a talk when the lesson was appointed. If the scholars are accustomed to longer lessons, as many at this age are, the home reading may be the second, third and fourth chapters; only the first chapter being explained when appointing the lesson. But this outline assumes the more ordinary case of a one chapter lesson.

Subject for class:—Let us talk to-day about Social Opportunities; our own as well as Queen Esther's.

Theme (not given to class):—The sacredness of opportunities.

INTRODUCTION.

Point of Contact.

(1) Opportunities.

What is the grandest social affair to which you have ever been? Did you enjoy it? What did you enjoy most about it? (Speak of the pleasure and profit of meeting people. The teacher's pleasure in meeting certain specified people at receptions and entertainments.)

Do your parents like you to have these social opportunities? Do you suppose God does? Why? (Speak of profit and influence.) We shall return to this subject.

(2) Dress.

If God cares about social opportunities for us, do you suppose He cares about the clothes we wear to them? (Leave answer as doubtful as the class does.) At least we do; why? (Draw out love for the pretty and the beautiful, love for show, etc.)

Does God take pleasure in the beautiful? (Draw out illustrations from nature.)

Correlation.[1]

(*a*) Dress.

Where does Christ show an appreciation of this? (Consider the lilies of the field, etc., St. Matt. 6: 28, 29.)

Where does Christ refer to a man going to a wedding without a wedding garment? (Parable of the marriage of the King's son, St. Matt. 22: 1–14.) Does He approve?

(*b*) Opportunities.

Did Christ Himself go to such affairs? What was the occasion of the first miracle? (St. John 2: 1–11.) Other social occasions. (Draw out, as St. Luke 7: 36; 19: 1–*et seq.*)

Can we imagine any reasons why Christ should care to go to such affairs? (Draw out why He might have cared to meet all sorts of people.)

Cross-correlation.

Is it ever a positive duty for people to attend such affairs? (Illustration — the president and other such people.) Do such people go for profit, or for influence? (Draw out both answers.)

[1] Only such illustrations must be used here as are already known to the scholars.

NEW MATERIAL.

Lesson Setting.

To-day we have a story illustrating an unselfish use of social opportunity and power.

About whom are we studying? How old do you suppose Esther was? (Tell of the oriental habits by which women were at their best between twelve and twenty, and compare Esther's probable age with the scholars'.)

Where was she? Why were Jews in Persia? (Tell or review the chief facts of the capitivity.)

Who was king? How did King Ahasuerus choose his new queen? (Tell or review a little of the times and let scholars feel how far behind ours they were.)

Did Ahasuerus know who Esther was? Who was she? Her cousin? What was he to her? etc.

Was Mordecai liked? By King Ahasuerus? Why not by Haman? What was Haman's position? Result of his dislike for Mordecai?

The Story.

1. *Great mourning.* What did Mordecai do when he knew of the decree? (Draw out in full vs. 1, 2.) What did the other Jews do? (v. 3.)

2. *Esther's attempt to cheer Mordecai.* How did Esther first hear of the trouble? Did she know the cause? What did she do for Mordecai? How did he receive her favours? (v. 4.)
3. *Esther learns the cause.* Is Esther offended? How does she learn? Who does she send? etc. (vs. 5–7.)
4. *Mordecai's charge.* Does Mordecai do anything more than state facts? Gives copy of what? Charges Esther to do what? Who takes the message to Esther? (vs. 8, 9.)
5. *The difficulty.* Does Esther reply? Of what law does she tell? How well known is the law? How long since Esther has been called to the king? (vs. 10–12.)
6. *Noblesse oblige.* What three points in Mordecai's reply? Did the decree include Esther? Was there reason to believe that the Jews should be delivered? Might her position be providential? (vs. 13, 14.) (Quote "Who knoweth, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?")
7. *The resolution.* What did Queen Esther say for Mordecai to do? How long? What did she say she would do? Meanwhile what? With whom? After three days what would she do? At what risk?

Did Mordecai do his part? Do you suppose Esther did? (vs. 15–17.) We shall see the outcome next time.

Conclusion.

Do you think Esther would have been a better woman if she had declined the opportunity of becoming queen? Who gave her her beauty and the charm that attracted Ahasuerus? Was she more or less likely to use her powers for others, and for good, if she became queen? You do not think, from your own experience, that so young a person was likely to be carried away by the pleasures and excitement of being queen? Who was with her?

Does God concern Himself with our opportunities? Take pleasure in our use of them? Even in our dress and expression of taste? Did you ever think of dressing to please Him who spoke so feelingly of Solomon and the lilies? Do you ever think of His being with you at entertainments? They are all for some purpose. (Suggest, perhaps, that you know a lady who thinks a great deal of having Christ always with her. She tries to have her room as she would if He were on earth and coming into it with her. She tries to

have nothing in any corner of any drawer that she would be ashamed to have Him see and say, "Is this yours?" or "Did you do this?" This will help to make the idea real and attractive to scholars of this age.) He has promised to be with us always. Shall we accept it?

IV

NOTES FROM CHILD-STUDY

Temperaments.

In speaking of children in such talks as these we ordinarily mean those of average brightness and of fairly well balanced powers. As a matter of fact almost every class contains a large proportion of scholars each of whom seems extreme in at least some one respect. The study of temperaments does much to show the teacher what these signs of onesidedness may mean and to what they are likely to lead. There are a variety of interesting and suggestive classifications according to temperament which it would be profitable to look into, but we must here limit ourselves to a mere glance at one of the simplest.

There are children, there are grown people, who seem constantly in action; they think quickly, usually rather intuitively correctly, but rarely profoundly; they enjoy contact with people, and are at their best when stimulated by social surroundings. In Sunday-school such children answer freely, usually are well informed on general subjects, are a help to the teacher

who works by the question method, and show well before visitors. They will run to bring the teacher a Bible or an extra chair. If extreme cases, however, they will push activity to troublesomeness and will quite fail to grasp the deeper teachings. This is the active and versatile temperament.

There are other people, both young and old, who easily assume an attitude of repose; they listen to what others say, weigh and balance evidences, and think deeply, but usually slowly; society and crowds give them little pleasure or satisfaction, though they form a limited number of warm and deep friendships. In Sunday-school children of this type listen attentively, usually with their eyes fixed on the teacher, and eagerly absorb the deeper teachings of the lesson. If extreme cases, they may utterly fail when required to answer quickly or before visitors, they fail to put the lesson teachings into action, and with regard to social courtesies they are cold and formal. This is the profound and receptive type.

Easily mistaken, at first, for illustrations of these temperaments are certain abnormal types. Nervous restlessness is not a sign of the active temperament. A child really of the profound temperament, or not markedly of either, may be uneasy and perpetually in motion for want of proper exercise, and perhaps from the unnatural

stimulation of tea and coffee. A child of the active temperament may be quiet and appear attentive when weakened from lack of proper nourishment, or made sluggish by bad air, sweets, and discouragement.

What are we to do with these types? Are we to try to mould them all after one pattern? Are we to check the extremes and give anxious attention to deficiencies? Surely not. Our one rule should be to build up. Build up shortcomings where we can, that our scholars may become balanced and rounded characters. Build up strong tendencies, that power, even genius it may be, shall have nourishment and guidance. A person strongly of the one temperament can never be made into a happy example of the opposite temperament. Each temperament has its work in the world. Martha and Mary were both beloved (St. John 11 : 5).

Nascent Periods.

What is even more important for the teacher than the study of temperaments is the study of the periods of child development. Psychology tells us that habits cannot be formed equally well at all times of life. Thoughts will not enter the mind equally well at all ages. Each habit and each thought has its own most favourable time. These favourable times are determined less by external circumstances than by the nature and

age of the person or being to be educated. They are periods of birth or accelerated growth for the particular habits or ideas in question. They are called " nascent periods."

Professor James shows us that if a young squirrel is taken into a house and fed and cared for, the habit of hiding nuts will nevertheless become nascent at a certain age. The young squirrel will stop, glance this way and that to see that no one is observing, scratch on the floor, take nuts and carefully deposit them, going through all the motions of covering them. If then the nuts, having not been really buried, are knocked away, and the young squirrel is still carefully fed every day both summer and winter, he does not return in hunger to what would under natural conditions be his storehouse. The time for forming this important habit passes, and the probability is that if the squirrel is later turned free in the woods he will be unable to provide for himself through the winter. He will die for want of a habit he has passed the time for forming.

The same is true of a child's physical growth. His teeth, for instance, come at certain times. These times may vary greatly with different children, but we cannot hurry the matter for any particular child. We may ease the process by pulling out a loose tooth or by lancing the gum, but no such acts will bring a second set of teeth

before their time. Just so with the changing voice. We cannot appreciably hurry or delay this change, though we can ruin the voice of the man by pressing it either to sing soprano after its time for change or to sing bass before it is settled. The same principle of nascent periods holds for the mental and for the spiritual development.

The observation of these nascent periods in a child's life shows the teacher what spiritual truths should be presented at a given time. Child-study in general also shows what interests children of different ages, and what knowledge they may be expected to have which can be used for point of contact and lesson correlation. In all general descriptions of these periods of child development we shall speak of ages and characteristics as frequently or usually observed, but the teacher must expect many and great variations. No two children are alike. The teacher will learn more of the child's interests and knowledge by visiting the home and observing what the child plays with and what his surroundings are than by many hours of theoretical study. The points noted here must be few, and of a kind to suggest what to look for in personal observation.

Childhood.

The first period of child life for the Sunday-school teacher to notice is that of infant class

age, or from three or four years of age to about seven or eight. If a teacher of an infant class in one of the denser parts of a large city should visit an average scholar's home, she would probably see the child either sitting at a table with a bread crust in one hand, or sitting on the floor with an old box, or a few spools, or some paper, possibly an old paper book. Perhaps a cat is the playmate. In many cases the child seems hardly even to play. If the child is six or seven it is probably supposed to be watching the baby, and this gives some incentive to such noises or motions as may attract the infant's attention.

With such children our points of contact are exceedingly limited. Yet we have the father and mother, the baby, the cat, being hungry and having food, being cold and having warm clothing, and a few other similar starting-points. Nearly all children have seen and love flowers. From these we lead to the idea of God as a loving Father or parent and Christ as a loving older Brother. We can teach ideas of kindness and love, including obedience as an expression of love. Meanwhile we must seek to arouse the child by music, marching, pictures, and other means.

But the natural child at this period, that is the child of a country home or of a sufficiently comfortable city home to include some toys and story telling, has a far greater variety of interests. His

senses are awake and active. He observes, he listens, he handles. Curiosity and wonder lead him on. Activity, imitation and a sense of rhythm make him especially susceptible to teaching in the form of hymns and marching exercises. The apparatus devices, especially of pictures and music, which we use to arouse the less fortunate children, serve with these as a most attractive means of teaching them a large amount of rote memory material, as hymns and Bible passages, which may be but slightly appreciated at the time. This apparatus work is a sort of sugar-coating for memory work at this rote memory age. What children learn by heart before twelve or fourteen they rarely forget. We wish deliberately to teach what they cannot yet appreciate. This is the time to store up treasures of this kind. Moreover, through music and marching they receive their first impressions of the joy of social harmony and of the beauty of prompt obedience.

This kind of work must be sharply distinguished and separated from the more thoughtful work of the lesson period. The lesson work, with the normal child, can start from a much wider range of interests than those given above. The child knows not only the cat, but the dog, the horse, the toy woolly lamb and a number of other real and toy animals. Animals are an especial delight to most children and make a pleas-

ant starting-point for a lesson. Next to animals come dolls. Little people, both of real life, as the children's little friends and playmates, and of story acquaintance, are of great interest to children.

The younger infant class children are not yet old enough to really play socially. Each child lives in its own little world of wonder from which it rather observes than plays with other little people. The first attempts at social play usually take the form of bossing. Still the very small child recognizes a kinship between itself and other children, and would far rather hear of another child in a story than of a grown person.

The power of observation, though untrained, is one of which the teacher can make a wide use. The natural child is especially fond of observing nature, from flowers to the simpler laws of physics. But his observations are confused with his imaginings. This is not a matter of conscious untruthfulness, and the teacher should be careful never to suggest deception in such a connection. Teach the child little by little to observe accurately and to distinguish between imagination and fact.

Above all, this is the nascent period of imagination. Fairies and angels, St. Nicholas and Jack Frost, are as real as any living beings. Children, from lack of language power and from lack of clear thoughts, cannot express themselves

to the real people about them. They live in a sort of strange but beautiful soap bubble. The world of their imagination is as real to them as the physical world, and is not distinguished from it. If we wish our children in after life to believe in the unseen, and to live above the dead level of materialism, we must appreciate, feed and train this strangely nascent power.

It is a fatal tendency of some modern infant class workers, in their reaction from the old idea of teaching adult religious conceptions to infants, to limit the infant class teachings to mere morals or studies of nature. The child of this age should be taught to see behind nature to a great and mysterious Power. Enough of the Life of Christ should be taught him to give his idea of divine love a concrete basis. The horrible side of the Crucifixion is quite unnecessary, to say the least. Yet why should not the infant class child be taught that the Son of God lived and died to make him good? The Power that makes the trees and flowers grow, that rules the thunder and the waves, is the loving Father of all, and sent His Son to tell of that love, and to make us good.

A characteristic of childhood which is an argument against certain teachings for infant class children is that of a feeling of rectitude and innocence. The natural child knows that he sometimes does wrong, but he does not think of him-

self as a bad being. To make him at this age think of himself as bad is more likely to make him bad than to make him grasp our ideas of Redemption.

A little story which was heard in an evangelical parlour meeting illustrates well the position of the child. It was something as follows. A number of children started out on a journey up a hill to a beautiful palace. In the palace dwelt a great king who was loved by all his people. In order to enter the palace it was necessary to show a sign at the gate, and each child had been given a beautiful pitcher which if shown would allow the person who carried it to enter. As the children climbed the hill one after another stumbled, and fell, and broke his pitcher. The first one that fell and broke his pitcher jumped up quickly, picked up the pieces and said, "I could not help falling, surely they will let me in." But he had been told that no one with a broken pitcher could enter and he took his climb in vain. Another one that fell became discouraged, said, "I do not care," and turned back. Still another, when he fell, sat down and cried, and said, "What can I do, I know I cannot enter with a broken pitcher, and I do not want to turn back; I want to see the great king." As he said this an old pilgrim who was passing heard him, and turned to the child, saying, "My little friend, if you really want to go on and see the

great king, I can give you a second pitcher, more beautiful than the first, with which you can enter the palace." The child looked up at the kind pilgrim, and with a happy "Thank you" took the new pitcher and went on his way. He finally reached the beautiful palace and was admitted and welcomed.

What do the pitchers represent? The first pitcher is innocence. But if there is any use in talking of this pitcher of innocence it surely cannot be a thing broken by the first selfish and obstinate cry of infancy. No, not until a being can understand something of moral law, can its innocence be questioned. At the infant class age a child's knowledge of moral law would not be recognized by any civil authority. It is at best exceedingly vague. Most people who study children would prefer to say that the first pitcher is not under normal conditions broken at this age. We would prefer to say that the second pitcher is known, and in a general way accepted, long before the child understands its meaning as a substitute for the broken first pitcher. The second pitcher is Christ.

Boyhood and Girlhood.

The second period of child life for the Sunday-school teacher to study is that between the infant class age and the period of rapid growth technically called Adolescence. It is from about

seven years of age to, let us say, twelve or fourteen, and may be called the period of Boyhood and Girlhood.

This period should be subdivided by those who expect to make more than a very general study of child development. For instance, from the infant class till about nine or ten the children must make considerable effort to learn to read and use the Bible. From about ten they take a strong interest in biographical studies, as the lives of Joshua and David, Elijah, Esther and Daniel. They also begin to enjoy history, to see causes, and to trace national development.

For the period as a whole, memory power remains almost as in the infant class period. Scholars of this age can put more conscious effort into their work and can learn longer portions by heart. They also have the advantage of understanding a much greater variety of words and thoughts, so that mere rote work is now seldom necessary or desirable. But the power of rote memory is there in full force as it will never be again. We must store the young minds with gems for future use.

Observation and imagination are also characteristic of this as of the preceding period. They are now, however, somewhat less wild. Untruthfulness should no longer arise from confusion of fact and fancy. Playful deception in the form of tricks is the bridge between the real

and the unreal that this age enjoys. It may also be a means of cultivating the inventive powers. The observation of what is customary gives rise at this stage to a keen sense of the ridiculous. Nearly everything that is not ordinarily seen is laughed over as ridiculous. The Sunday-school teacher must not be misled by such outbursts. They are neither disorderly nor inappreciative. If sympathized with when innocent, they can easily be checked when too personal or when otherwise ill-advised. The habit of proper indulgence and proper check which the appreciative teacher can start at this time will prevent the degeneration of this natural impulse into the habit of silly giggling so often seen in young people.

Observation leads at this age to a love of nature, especially in its wilder aspects. At about six the child asks who made the flowers, the grass, and the different objects of nature. It is not satisfied with the general answer, God made everything. In its struggle for monotheism it seeks concrete statements. By the end of the infant class period the child knows God not only as Father but as Creator. He must now come to know the Ruler of the universe. Like the savage he loves to read about and imitate, he worships the God of nature.

As he sees nature obey laws, so he sees the soldier and sailor obey. He has had his own

first lessons in obedience. Obedience appeals to him. If given sufficient freedom, he enjoys military drill. We are here even using a grammatical "he," for girls too, at this age, enjoy dancing and gymnasium drills. Children at this age will quickly see and take advantage of lax discipline, but they do not wish it, and will almost invariably say so if asked. When untaught they frequently imagine that only children have to obey. Yet with very little teaching the ideas of universal law and obedience are grasped. This is the nascent period for appreciating the reasonableness of law and obedience.

Once appreciating this, the child has a firm foundation for a moral conscience. At the beginning of this stage, although the child may not know the meaning of the word conscience, he knows the voice of right and wrong within him. It is one of the most important duties of the Sunday-school to give the boy or girl of this age a spiritual conception of this matter. It should lead them to think of the God of nature as a God who speaks to them; and of conscience as one of His modes of speaking.

With this budding forth of conscience comes the rapid development of the entire moral nature. The boy or girl now can be appealed to for truthfulness and honour. Habits of truthfulness, honesty, punctuality, and even of industry are now to be formed. Morals are good customs or

habits. This is the age when moral habits are especially nascent. Even the habit of regularly reading or studying the Bible, or of regularly attending church, if begun now and not in some way made distasteful will almost certainly become a lasting habit.

This moral awakening does not stop short of serious responsibility. The child nine or ten will take serious charge of a younger child. When boys and girls of this age are treated as irresponsible, not only is proper pride and desire for character growth dampened, but their growing ability to take responsibility may be seriously arrested. It is often necessary to watch and see that they fulfill duty, but this should be done without their notice. If properly taught they can usually be relied upon, and they must feel that we do rely upon them.

Judgment also now becomes active. The child not only sees the reasonableness of obedience, but can be easily led to see and intellectually accept many of the fundamental teachings of Christianity. Such truths as God's love for the sinner, spiritual growth as involving change of thought, and the divine use and sanctification of the secular and material should be thoroughly inculcated at this stage. It is the time when children are quickest to see the conclusion of a properly introduced lesson. At the same time we must remember that the acceptance

of these truths is more intellectual than personal. We are laying foundations for the future.

Although the child at this age wishes the confidence and approbation of older people, he normally lives in a social world quite apart from them. Adult society is governed by to him incomprehensible rules. The child has indeed passed out of the infant stage in which he lived in a world of his own. He is now in a world of other people his own age. He understands them and they understand him. The boy or girl world has its own code. It is rarely discussed, but each member knows what to expect. Bosses, leaders and heroes have their appropriate places; the former predominating among the younger children, the latter among the older ones. At first each individual works for himself, but little by little team work and gang interests come forward. We teachers can sympathize with and even counsel the doings within these youthful realms, but we must not expect to be included in them.

Nevertheless we can learn from observation of this stage what to use for point of contact and what religious teachings will appeal to our scholars. This is preeminently an Old Testament stage. Psychologists show us that the child passes, though rapidly, through the stages of development of the human race. He has a certain advantage from living among those who know something of the outcome, but his life will

be shallow if he does not pass through each stage for himself. He now must pass through the Old Testament experiences of seeking righteousness by means of the law. His moral nature demands it.

He must indeed know something of Christ. The Old Testament Jews knew vaguely of Him. He should know more than they did. He should look not only to David and Daniel as heroes, but he should recognize in Christ the true Pattern and Guide. During the latter part of this stage especially, the life of Christ on earth, in all its purity and unselfishness, appeals strongly.

To press the cause of Christ early in this stage is a mistake. The child is only beginning to learn what a cause is. As has been suggested, during the first part of this period even in his games he plays for himself rather than for his side. His form of baseball is for individual runs. After he has learned in games to identify his interests with those of his team or side we can urge the championship of a religious cause.

Also to check the struggle for righteousness by works is unfortunate. The more thoroughly the young person tests this method the richer will be his appreciation of New Testament truth. St. Paul is probably the grandest pattern of Christian manhood the world has ever known. Did not St. Paul's grasp of Christianity owe much to his previous struggles under a more primitive

religion? St. Paul, like the world, waited long for the revelation of Christ and His Salvation. Christ came in the fullness of time.

Adolescence.

This third period begins with that of rapid physical growth which usually begins with boys at thirteen or fourteen and with girls a year or two earlier. We can only here touch upon a few characteristics of its earlier years. It is an age of intensity, of apparent contradictions, and of rich possibilities.

As the little child lives in a social world of its own imagination, and the boy or girl in a social world of other boys or girls, so the young person takes new steps in the process of adjustment to his social environment. Boys and girls now become more conscious of each other as boys and girls. This may at first take the form of mutual repulsion. But before long there comes attention to dress, the choosing of "girls" and beaux, and the enjoyment of mixed society.

Moreover, the young person begins to seek adult society. The boy may take for companion a girl some years older than himself. There is the wish to be among grown people and to share the life and interests of humanity.

With this comes a looking to the future and a consciousness that the past with its careless happiness is gone. The boy is anxious to start in

business or prepare for college. The girl has a half-conscious purpose in her trivialities, and grapples with or is bored by her studies according to the extent to which she feels their connection with her pictured future. It is the age of ideals. Day-dreaming may be carried too far, yet we must let the young person see the castle ahead, as in Cole's picture of youth in the Voyage of Life. If we expect achievement we must remember Joel's idea of people in the age of prosperity when, he says, "your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2 : 28).

The laziness and awkwardness so general at this age are due to the great physical and mental changes which are taking place. They signify a lack of physical and mental adjustment rather than a lack of power. Contemplativeness or even laziness on the one hand, and physical power or outbursts of great activity on the other, while apparently contradictions, unite at this period, and when not carefully guided and provided for often lead to wild and hazardous undertakings. Bashfulness, moodiness, stubbornness, wilfulness and temper also indicate the strain through which the system is passing rather than any moral condition. Physical training and exercise may do more to correct these faults than many Sunday-school lessons.

With a daring independence and touchy self-confidence is combined a longing for sympa-

thy, a feeling, often too true though usually exaggerated, of not being understood, and a fondness for cronies and chums. With the desire to participate in social life is often combined the tendency to conceal feelings, to be moody and to feel lonely. This is sometimes intensified by the discovery that some idealized acquaintance or teacher is not infallible. Teachers should be especially careful now to point higher than themselves. It is at this stage that the young person turns with emotional eagerness to the thought of Christ as a personal and sympathetic Friend.

The young person's ideas of individuality and of personal responsibility have also grown. He is to take his position in the world. As has been said before, the child passes through the stages of development of the race. He now passes out of the stage where the whole family or the entire race is initiated into a religion because of the belief of the chief or leader. He no longer speaks of "our church," or "our" position whatever it may be, in the impersonal way so customary a year or two earlier. He forms his own views. He is a Christian because he personally embraces Christianity. He must stand on his own feet. This is the natural and appropriate time to put the question, "Do you believe?" It is the natural and appropriate time for the personal assumption of the vows made for one in baptism, or for otherwise uniting with the Church.

Yet more, the many new thoughts and feelings which crowd in upon the young person at this time compel introspection. If he has had poor or low standards his rapid development may cause great conceitedness. But if he has sought to follow the Christ life, if he has sought union with the Spirit of good, he now easily feels his shortcomings. Like St. Paul, he learns that man's most glorious works are incomplete and unsatisfactory. Now is the time to emphasize the doctrine of Grace.

It is well known that this is a most critical stage. As the physical and social natures at this time need the wisest of care, so the spiritual nature needs the most delicate guidance. The young person must be protected from false emotion and a morbid tendency to penance. A more or less elaborate and strict preparation for confirmation or church membership is often an aid in the desired direction. The severe initiatory rites required at this age by many primitive peoples have a profound appropriateness. Strong, profound and even emotional hymns; ritualistic services; and arduous tasks in the line of committee work or other church duties will do much to keep the young from undesirable thoughts and reading.

With all the facts and statistics civilization now has, it need hardly be urged that if the young person is not already a Christian, or if he has

wandered into ways of evil, it is of the utmost importance that this period of intensity should not pass without every effort for conversion.

A few years, sometimes only two or three, after the beginning of this period of Adolescence, when the young person has taken his stand as a church member and begun to appreciate the gospels in a deeper and more personal way, new phases of spiritual life begin to occur. These are not understood by the young person who is passing through them. Too often they are not understood or properly met by teachers and friends. It is this neglect which causes much of the deadness of church life in comparison with the number of young people annually admitted.

Only two points in this connection can be touched upon here. The first is an eagerness for service. The young person is now ready not only to follow a leader but to fight for and champion a cause. It is not merely the poverty of much that is called Sunday-school teaching that makes our young people eager to take classes themselves or to enter other lines of work. It is often the scholars of the best teachers who most show this restlessness. Frequently the scholars do not know what they really want; and frequently teachers, judging by an apparent lack of readiness to serve in small matters, suppose their scholars have not yet reached this stage of development. On the other hand, teachers sometimes

allow their scholars to pass from them at the beginning of this stage. This usually results in a few years of unguided efforts, followed by a turning away from what has not met with the anticipated results. Either course tends to leave the maturing lives in distress and the church without its much needed workers.

Young people at this age need both actual training in some line of service, such as can be given in a normal class which gives the theory and practice of lesson planning and teaching; and inspiring lessons on the joy and duty of self-sacrificing service, such as can be drawn from the life of St. Paul or the public ministry and culminating acts of the Life of Christ.

The second point is a desire to harmonize all one's thoughts and acts, both religious and secular, into a clear and purposeful system. At this age human nature is vitally opposed to the "double-minded man." It is with great reluctance that the unity of life is sacrificed to the clashing demands of the secular and the religious. Poor is that life that starts out as a house divided against itself.

With great care, then, we Sunday-school teachers should avoid trampling upon the teachings of other earnest workers. Such measures tend to increase the terrible doubts which sometimes arise at this period. With sympathetic assurance we should seek to aid the process or adjustment.

The more we can put ourselves in touch with the good that is in all branches of study and labour, and show their part in Christian life and service, the more we can aid our scholars to form a satisfactory philosophy of life. The stronger we can make this unity of all the interests of life around a deep and lasting religious core, the surer we may be that our scholars will increasingly look to religious sources for guidance, strength and happiness.

It is at this period that a study of the Acts of the Apostles, with correlated portions from the Epistles, is especially appropriate. Before this time the scholar could not appreciate the great theme of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, working in man. Now he seeks profound thought and can experience just enough of the influence of the Spirit to begin to realize the depth of the subject of the Book of Acts. He enjoys the profound touches in the Epistles, but is hardly ready to take them apart from their connection with the life and struggles recorded in the Acts. Altruism and profound religious thought are nascent. We must feed and exercise them.

Conclusion.

The aim of much that has been said in this chapter is to show that there is a natural order in spiritual development. Experts may differ slightly concerning details, but the main points

are true, and the inferences are of vital importance. We shall notice three.

First, if the teacher attempts to present a truth before the nascent period for that truth, he may waste valuable time, he may discourage himself, and, what is still worse, he may accustom his children to hearing sacred truths to which they do not respond. This hardening influence may have lifelong effects.

Second, if he should succeed in forcing some recognition of a truth before its nascent period, there is danger in so doing of weakening the subsequent spiritual life. We know the saying that early risers are apt to be conceited all the forenoon and stupid and uninteresting all the afternoon and evening. Dr. Hall describes the circumstances even more aptly when he says that "by the forcing method . . . the soul is given just enough religious stimulus to act as an inoculation against deeper and more serious interest later."

This is far from saying that the child should be kept in ignorance of the great doctrines of Christianity until some time when we decide that he is old enough to grasp them. To touch upon these truths is to pave the way for them. The argument is against urging a personal response before what has been observed to be the nascent period.

Third, if on the other hand, the scholar arrives

at the period for grasping a specific truth and does not find that truth, if he is ready for a new stage of spiritual development and is still fed only on thought suitable for earlier stages, his spiritual development is in danger of being impoverished or even permanently arrested.

Fortunately there are psychological conditions that lessen these bad effects of unskilled teaching. Fortunately, too, the personality of the teacher counts for far more than knowledge of method or child-study. Ask any person of noble character or pure spiritual life what has most influenced him and the answer will almost certainly be some other personality. If personality has such power, how much more power has personality plus knowledge.

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